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**STUDY CENTRE**

# DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

FOR UPSC CIVIL SERVICE EXAMINATION

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 **9972258970 & 9740702455**

**#317/A SKB Arcade, D. Subbaiah Road,  
Ramaswamy Circle, Mysuru-570004**



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## 1. PRAHAAR: India's National Counter-Terrorism Policy and Strategy

The Union Home Ministry has officially released **PRAHAAR**, India's first comprehensive anti-terror policy. This strategic framework addresses the evolving nature of threats from state and non-state actors, focusing on multi-dimensional security across land, air, sea, and cyberspace.

### Key Highlights of the PRAHAAR Policy

- **Comprehensive Threat Landscape:** The policy acknowledges that India faces threats on all three fronts—water, land, and air—necessitating a synchronized defense mechanism.
- **Cyber-Kinetic Convergence:** Beyond traditional warfare, it highlights the rising risk from criminal hackers and nation-states targeting critical information infrastructure.
- **Protection of Critical Sectors:** Strategies are laid out to safeguard vital economic pillars including atomic energy, space, defense, railways, power, and aviation.
- **Secular Approach to Counter-Terror:** The policy explicitly states that India does not link terrorism to any specific religion, ethnicity, nationality, or civilization.
- **Tackling Emerging Technologies:** It addresses the use of drones and encrypted communication by handlers across the border, specifically in regions like Punjab and Jammu & Kashmir.
- **Nexus of Terror and Crime:** The document identifies an increasing reliance of terrorist groups on organized criminal networks for logistics, recruitment, and funding.



### Definitions of Key Terms

- **State Actors:** Entities or individuals acting on behalf of a sovereign government to conduct activities, often involving cross-border "sponsored terrorism."
- **Non-State Actors:** Individuals or groups not affiliated with a government (e.g., Al-Qaeda, IS) that use violence to achieve political or ideological goals.
- **Critical Information Infrastructure (CII):** Computer resources, the destruction of which would have a debilitating impact on national security, economy, or public health.
- **Sleeper Cells:** Secret groups of agents or terrorists who remain inactive within a target population until ordered to act.

### Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Article 355:** Directs the Union to protect every State against external aggression and internal disturbance.
- **Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA), 1967:** The primary anti-terror law in India, amended to allow the designation of individuals as terrorists.
- **National Investigation Agency (NIA) Act, 2008:** Governs the specialized agency mandated to investigate and prosecute offenses affecting the sovereignty and integrity of India.
- **Information Technology Act, 2000 (Section 66F):** Prescribes punishment for acts of cyber terrorism.



- **Seventh Schedule:** While "Public Order" is a State subject, "National Security" and "Extradition" fall under the Union List, allowing for central policies like PRAHAAR.

### Additional Key Points

- **Sponsored Terrorism:** The policy identifies the persistent threat from "Jihadi" terror outfits and their frontal organizations operating from across the border.
- **Global Terror Links:** It warns against the influence of Al-Qaeda and IS attempting to incite local violence through radicalization and sleeper cells.
- **Capacity Building:** Emphasizes the development of specialized units to protect high-value assets from both physical and digital sabotage.

### Conclusion and UPSC Relevance

The PRAHAAR policy marks a shift from a reactive to a proactive security posture by integrating technological defense with traditional intelligence. For the **UPSC Civil Services Exam**, this topic is highly relevant for **General Studies Paper III (Internal Security)**. Aspirants should focus on the "Terrorism-Organized Crime Nexus," the "Role of External State and Non-State Actors," and "Challenges to Internal Security through Communication Networks." Understanding this policy is crucial for questions regarding India's security architecture and the evolution of counter-terrorism strategies in the 21st century.

## 2. Project Cheetah: Expansion and Current Status (2026)

The Union government's ambitious **Project Cheetah** is entering a consolidation phase with the scheduled translocation of eight more cheetahs from **Botswana** to Madhya Pradesh's **Kuno National Park (KNP)** on February 28, 2026. This move highlights India's commitment to restoring its grassland ecosystems and marks the third African nation to partner in this world-first intercontinental reintroduction program.

### Key Highlights of the Translocation

- **Population Growth:** The arrival of 8 new cheetahs will bring India's total cheetah population to **46**, significantly bolstered by the birth of 8 cubs at KNP in early February 2026.
- **International Cooperation:** Botswana joins Namibia and South Africa as the third source nation, reflecting successful conservation diplomacy and a broadening of the genetic pool for the Indian population.
- **Logistical Operation:** The Indian Air Force (IAF) will transport the cheetahs to Gwalior via large aircraft, followed by a helicopter transfer to Kuno to minimize transit stress.
- **Quarantine Protocol:** Following international norms, the new arrivals will undergo a mandatory **30-day quarantine** to monitor health and facilitate acclimatization to the northern hemisphere's climate.
- **Breeding Success:** The project has moved beyond mere survival; the birth of second-generation cubs indicates that the habitat, prey base, and monitoring protocols are stabilizing.





- **Landscape Expansion:** While KNP remains the primary site, the project is expanding to **Gandhi Sagar Wildlife Sanctuary (MP)** to prevent overcrowding and create a "metapopulation" across the central Indian landscape.

### Definitions of Key Terms

- **Translocation:** The deliberate movement of wild individuals or populations from one part of their range to another for conservation purposes.
- **Metapopulation:** A group of spatially separated populations of the same species which interact at some level, helping to prevent local extinctions.
- **Flagship Species:** A species chosen to raise support for biodiversity conservation in a given place or social context (e.g., Cheetah for Indian grasslands).
- **Bomas:** Specialized enclosures used for the soft release and acclimatization of wild animals during translocation projects.

### Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Article 48A (DPSP):** Mandates the State to protect and improve the environment and safeguard the forests and wildlife of the country.
- **Article 51A(g):** Establishes a fundamental duty for citizens to protect and improve the natural environment, including forests, lakes, rivers, and wildlife.
- **Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972:** Provides the legal framework for the protection of wild animals; Project Cheetah is overseen by the **National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA)**, a statutory body under this Act.
- **CITES (Appendix I):** The Cheetah (*Acinonyx jubatus*) is listed under Appendix I, necessitating strict international regulations and permits for its intercontinental movement.

### Additional Important Key Points

- **Ecological Role:** As a top predator, the cheetah helps regulate herbivore populations (like Chinkara and Chital), preventing overgrazing and promoting the health of "wasteland" classified grasslands.
- **Conservation Challenges:** Despite success, the project has faced hurdles including a total of 21 deaths (9 adults and 12 cubs) since 2022 due to causes like infection, heat stress, and natural conflict.
- **Economic Impact:** Tourism at Kuno has reportedly doubled in the last two years, fostering local employment and community engagement through "Cheetah Mitras."

### Conclusion and UPSC Relevance

The successful transition of Project Cheetah from a pilot reintroduction to a breeding metapopulation signifies a landmark in global conservation biology. For the **UPSC Civil Services Exam**, this topic is vital for **General Studies Paper III (Environment and Biodiversity)**. It links to themes of "Species Reintroduction," "International Conservation Agreements," and "Habitat Restoration." Candidates should be prepared to discuss the scientific, ethical, and administrative complexities of translocating large carnivores and the importance of restoring the grassland-savanna biome in India.



### 3. Judicial Intervention in Delhi-NCR Air Quality Management (2026)

The Supreme Court of India, led by a three-judge Bench under Chief Justice Surya Kant, has intensified its oversight on the persistent air pollution crisis in the National Capital Region (NCR). The Court is currently examining a series of long-term structural recommendations aimed at decoupling industrial activity from coal consumption to ensure the "Right to Clean Air" for the citizens of the region.

#### Key Highlights of the Judicial Proceedings

- **Industrial De-coalization:** The Supreme Court has directed the Union Government to identify coal-dependent industries and evaluate a phased plan to shift them outside the geographical limits of Delhi-NCR.
- **Thermal Power Plant Moratorium:** The Court is examining a significant proposal to bar the establishment of any new coal-based thermal power plants within a 300km radius of the national capital.
- **Multi-Ministry Accountability:** Formal responses have been sought from the Ministries of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC), Power, and Petroleum to ensure a coordinated policy response rather than siloed efforts.
- **CAQM Recommendations:** The Bench is acting upon the long-term measures mooted by the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM), focusing on abatement of industrial and vehicular emissions.
- **Stakeholder Inclusivity:** The states of Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, and Rajasthan have been directed to issue public notices to invite suggestions and proposals from industries and other stakeholders before implementing shifts.
- **Holistic Pollution Control:** Beyond industrial curbs, the court remains seized of the issue of stubble burning and has called for the implementation of sustainable agricultural practices across the NCR hinterland.



#### Definitions of Key Terms

- **Aerosols/Particulate Matter (PM):** Microscopic solids or liquid droplets suspended in air (PM2.5 and PM10) that can penetrate deep into the lungs and bloodstream.
- **Stubble Burning (Parali):** The practice of setting fire to straw stubble that remains after harvesting grains like paddy, a major seasonal contributor to smog in North India.
- **Thermal Power Plant (TPP) Emission Norms:** Standards set for the release of Sulfur Dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>), Nitrogen Oxides (NO<sub>x</sub>), and Mercury from coal-burning units.
- **Smog:** A type of intense air pollution; a portmanteau of "smoke" and "fog," often exacerbated by temperature inversion during winters.

#### Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Article 21:** The Supreme Court has repeatedly interpreted the "Right to Life" to include the "Right to a Healthy Environment" and "Clean Air."
- **Article 48A (DPSP):** Directive to the State to protect and improve the environment and to safeguard the forests and wildlife.



- **Article 51A(g):** Fundamental duty of every citizen to protect and improve the natural environment.
- **The CAQM Act, 2021:** Established the Commission for Air Quality Management in NCR and Adjoining Areas for better coordination, research, and resolution of problems surrounding air quality.
- **Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981:** The primary legislation providing for the prevention, control, and abatement of air pollution.

#### Additional Important Key Points

- **Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP):** The emergency measures implemented in phases (Stage I to IV) based on the Air Quality Index (AQI) levels in Delhi.
- **National Clean Air Programme (NCAP):** A long-term, time-bound national-level strategy to achieve 20% to 30% reduction in PM concentrations by 2024 (now updated for 2026 targets).
- **Flue Gas Desulphurization (FGD):** A set of technologies used to remove sulfur dioxide from exhaust flue gases of fossil-fuel power plants, a key requirement for TPPs near NCR.

#### Conclusion and UPSC Relevance

The Supreme Court's proactive stance highlights the failure of executive measures in achieving a permanent solution to air pollution. By suggesting the relocation of coal-based industries and a 300km buffer for power plants, the judiciary is pushing for "Environmental Federalism" where states must collaborate under central oversight. For the **UPSC Civil Services Exam**, this topic is critical for **GS Paper II (Judicial Activism & Statutory Bodies)** and **GS Paper III (Environment & Pollution Control)**. Aspirants should focus on the conflict between industrial growth and environmental sustainability, the efficacy of the CAQM, and the legal challenges in enforcing emission norms across state borders.

#### 4. Allahabad High Court Ruling on Interfaith Relationships and Anti-Conversion Law

The Allahabad High Court has delivered a landmark judgment providing police protection to 12 interfaith live-in couples, clarifying that the mere existence of an interfaith relationship does not trigger the penal provisions of the State's anti-conversion law unless an actual religious conversion is involved. The court emphasized that the State cannot view adult citizens through the lens of religion when they exercise their fundamental right to choose a partner.

#### Key Highlights of the High Court Judgment

- **Scope of Anti-Conversion Law:** The Court ruled that the Uttar Pradesh Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion of Religion Act, 2021, applies only in cases of actual conversion through force, fraud, or allurement; it does not prohibit interfaith marriages or relationships per se.
- **Primacy of Adult Autonomy:** The Bench observed that if the law permits same-sex couples to live together, the State or family cannot object to the heterosexual relationships of two consenting adults of different faiths.
- **State's Constitutional Obligation:** The judgment reiterates that the State is duty-bound to protect the life and liberty of every citizen under Article 21, regardless of their religious beliefs or the social perception of their relationship.





- **Rejection of State's "Unlawful" Argument:** The Court dismissed the State's contention that interfaith live-in relationships are inherently "unlawful" if they do not comply with the procedural requirements of Sections 8 and 9 of the Anti-Conversion Act.
- **Unity in Diversity:** The Bench noted that disregarding the choice of an individual of majority age is antithetical to the freedom of choice and poses a threat to the national concept of unity in diversity.
- **Protection from Interference:** The High Court directed the police and private respondents (families) to refrain from interfering in the privacy and liberty of the petitioners, affirming their right to live peacefully.

### Definitions of Key Terms

- **Interfaith Relationship:** A romantic or domestic partnership between two individuals belonging to different religious faiths.
- **Live-in Relationship:** An arrangement where two people who are not married live together in an emotionally and/or sexually intimate relationship on a long-term or permanent basis.
- **Actual Conversion:** The formal act of changing one's religion from one faith to another, which under the UP law, requires specific notifications to the District Magistrate.
- **Age of Majority:** The threshold of adulthood as recognized by law (18 years in India), at which a person acquires full legal capacity to make personal life decisions.

### Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Article 21:** Guarantees the Right to Life and Personal Liberty, which the Supreme Court has previously interpreted to include the "Right to Choose a Partner."
- **Article 14 & 15:** Prohibit discrimination by the State on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, or place of birth, ensuring equality before the law.
- **Article 25:** Grants the freedom to profess, practice, and propagate religion, which also includes the right to not convert or to maintain one's faith within a marriage.
- **U.P. Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion of Religion Act, 2021:** A state law aimed at preventing "love jihad" by criminalizing conversions done through misrepresentation, force, or marriage.
- **Special Marriage Act, 1954:** A central legislation that provides a legal framework for the marriage of people belonging to different religions without requiring conversion.

### Additional Important Key Points

- **Procedural Safeguards:** The State had argued that under Sections 8 and 9 of the Act, a 60-day notice to the DM is mandatory for conversion; however, the Court clarified this is irrelevant if no conversion is sought.
- **Judicial Precedents:** This ruling aligns with the Supreme Court's stance in cases like *Shafin Jahan v. Asokan K.M. (Hadiya Case)* and *Lata Singh v. State of UP*, which upheld individual autonomy in choosing life partners.
- **Privacy as a Fundamental Right:** The judgment draws strength from the *Justice K.S. Puttaswamy* verdict, which established privacy (including intimate choices) as a core component of Article 21.



## Conclusion and UPSC Relevance

The Allahabad High Court's decision acts as a vital check on executive overreach regarding personal liberties. By distinguishing between "interfaith cohabitation" and "unlawful conversion," the judiciary has safeguarded the secular fabric of the Constitution against rigid interpretations of state laws. For the **UPSC Civil Services Exam**, this topic is essential for **GS Paper II (Polity and Governance)** and **GS Paper IV (Ethics)**. It touches upon the "Conflict between State Laws and Fundamental Rights," "Judicial Review," and the "Societal vs. Individual Morality." Candidates should focus on the balancing act between the State's power to regulate conversion and the individual's right to privacy and choice.

## 5. MP Government to Extend Bhavantar Scheme to Mustard Farmers

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav announced in the State Assembly that the government plans to extend the **Bhavantar Bhugtan Yojana** to mustard farmers. This strategic move aims to provide price security to approximately 80 lakh farmers by compensating them for the volatility in market prices compared to government-mandated rates.

### Key Highlights of the Policy Extension

- **Price Deficiency Payment:** The scheme compensates farmers for the "difference" (Bhavantar) between the Minimum Support Price (MSP) and the actual market price or a "modal rate," ensuring they do not suffer during market crashes.
- **Broadening Agricultural Support:** Originally focused on soybean and millets, the inclusion of mustard—a key Rabi crop—aims to stabilize income for a massive base of 80 lakh oilseed growers.
- **Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT):** The compensation amount is credited directly into the Aadhaar-linked bank accounts of registered farmers, minimizing leakage and administrative delays.
- **Reduction in Procurement Logistics:** Unlike traditional procurement where the government buys and stores the physical grain, this scheme allows farmers to sell in the open market, reducing state costs for warehousing and transportation.
- **Market Integration:** Farmers are required to sell their produce only through registered **Mandis** (APMCs) during a specific window to be eligible for the price difference payment.
- **Political Context:** The announcement coincided with legislative debates over the **Ladli Behna Scheme**, where the current government recently increased the monthly allowance to **1,500** per month for eligible women.



### Definitions of Key Terms

- **Bhavantar (Price Difference):** The gap between the Minimum Support Price (MSP) set by the Centre and the average market price (Modal Rate).
- **Modal Rate:** The average market price of a particular crop in the major mandis of the state and neighboring states over a specific period.
- **Minimum Support Price (MSP):** The floor price at which the government promises to buy crops from farmers, designed to insure them against any sharp fall in farm prices.



- **Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT):** A mechanism to transfer subsidies and benefits directly into the bank accounts of beneficiaries using their unique Aadhaar identification.

### Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Article 38 (DPSP):** Mandates the State to promote the welfare of the people by securing a social order in which justice—social, economic, and political—shall inform all institutions of national life.
- **Seventh Schedule:** "Agriculture" is a **State Subject** (Entry 14, List II), giving State governments the primary authority to design and implement price support schemes like Bhavantar.
- **National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013:** While primarily about subsidized food grains, it provides the broader legal context for state interventions in agricultural pricing and farmer welfare.

### Additional Important Key Points

- **Soybean Foundation:** Madhya Pradesh is known as the "Soybean Bowl" of India; the success of Bhavantar in this sector has served as a pilot for its extension to mustard.
- **Ladli Behna Scheme Updates:** The scheme for women between 21 and 60 years (family income < 2.5 lakh/year) has seen its monthly allowance rise from 1,000 to 1,500, though new registrations are currently on hold.
- **Impact on Crop Diversification:** By providing price security for oilseeds like mustard, the government encourages farmers to move away from water-intensive monocropping of wheat or paddy.

### Conclusion and UPSC Relevance

The extension of the Bhavantar scheme reflects a shift from "physical procurement" to "income support" models in Indian agriculture. For the **UPSC Civil Services Exam**, this topic is essential for **GS Paper III (Agriculture & Economy)**. It highlights critical issues such as "Issues related to Direct and Indirect Farm Subsidies," "MSP and its Alternatives," and "Buffer Stocks and Food Security." Understanding this scheme is vital for evaluating the efficiency of DBT versus physical MSP procurement and its impact on the fiscal health of the State.

## 6. Judicial Oversight on Crowd Management: Karnataka HC Directive (2026)

In a significant move toward public safety, the Karnataka High Court has directed the State government to enforce a comprehensive **Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)** for crowd control. This interim measure will remain in effect until the formal enactment of the **Karnataka Crowd Control (Managing Crowd at Events and Place of Gathering) Bill, 2025**, ensuring that large-scale events do not repeat the tragedies of the past.

### Key Highlights of the High Court Directive

- **Interim Enforcement:** The Court ordered that the revised SOP, which incorporates expert suggestions, must be strictly followed for all mass gatherings until the state legislature passes the pending Bill.
- **Origin of Action:** The directive follows a suo motu Public Interest Litigation (PIL) initiated after a tragic stampede outside the M. Chinnaswamy Stadium on **June 4, 2025**, which resulted in 11 fatalities during IPL celebrations.





- **Amicus Curiae Role:** Senior Advocate S. Susheela, acting as amicus curiae, pointed out that the current SOP offers more robust safety measures than the draft Bill, prompting the Court to ask the legislature to bridge these gaps.
- **Mandatory Application & NOCs:** Under the SOP, organizers of events expecting over **1,000 people** must apply via a digital portal and obtain mandatory No-Objection Certificates (NOCs) from fire, health, and traffic departments.
- **Police Accountability:** The SOP mandates annual refresher courses for police personnel up to the rank of Sub-Inspector, focusing on de-escalation tactics and simulation-based risk assessments.
- **Social Media Regulation:** Organizers are held responsible for monitoring and clarifying misinformation on social media that could trigger spontaneous overcrowding or panic.

### Definitions of Key Terms

- **Amicus Curiae:** A "friend of the court"; a neutral professional advisor appointed by the judge to assist in cases involving complex public interest issues.
- **Suo Motu Cognizance:** A Latin term meaning "on its own motion," where a court takes up a case without a formal petition from an aggrieved party.
- **Crowd Crush/Stampede:** A phenomenon where the density of a crowd becomes so high that individuals are unable to move, leading to respiratory failure or physical injury.
- **Indemnity Bond:** A legal guarantee (set at **1 crore** in the proposed Bill) where organizers agree to compensate for any loss of life or property damage during the event.

### Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Article 21:** Interpreted by the Court as the "Right to Life" which necessitates the State to ensure public safety and prevent avoidable disasters.
- **Article 226:** Empowers the High Court to issue directions or writs for the enforcement of fundamental rights and for any other purpose.
- **Disaster Management Act, 2005:** Provides the overarching legal framework for managing man-made disasters; the Court clarified that the SOP does not override this Act.
- **Seventh Schedule (List II, Entry 1):** "Public Order" is a State subject, providing the Karnataka government the legislative competence to draft the Crowd Control Bill.

### Additional Important Key Points

- **Tiered Licensing:** Authority for permission varies by crowd size: Station House Officer (<7,000), DySP (7,000–50,000), and Commissioner/SP (>50,000).
- **Strict Evacuation Norms:** The SOP mandates minimum evacuation corridors of 1.5–2 meters and the positioning of medical "Field Hospitals" for gatherings exceeding 50,000 people.
- **Liability Clauses:** The proposed Bill suggests absolute liability for organizers, making them responsible for damages regardless of proven negligence—a point currently under legislative scrutiny.

### Conclusion and UPSC Relevance

The Karnataka High Court's intervention underscores a transition from "reactive policing" to "preventive crowd management." By prioritizing an SOP over a potentially weaker draft Bill, the judiciary has



emphasized that administrative procedures must be scientifically grounded. For the **UPSC Civil Services Exam**, this is a vital case study for **GS Paper II (Judiciary and Governance)** and **GS Paper III (Disaster Management)**. It highlights the importance of "Judicial Activism" in protecting citizens and the necessity of "Crowd Management" as a core component of internal security and urban governance.

## 7. Centre to Consider 'Micro Minority' Status for Christians

Union Minister for Minority Affairs Kiren Rijiju has stated that the Central Government will consider a request from the Syro-Malabar Church to accord Christians the status of a "**micro minority**." The proposal aims to address concerns regarding the equitable distribution of resources and benefits among various minority groups, ensuring that numerically smaller communities receive adequate protection and developmental support.

### Key Highlights of the Proposal

- **Equitable Resource Distribution:** The request is rooted in the perception that existing minority benefits and reservations are disproportionately utilized by larger religious groups, leaving smaller communities at a disadvantage.
- **Focus on Numerical Inferiority:** With Christians constituting approximately **2.3%** of India's population (Census 2011), the Church argues for a "micro" tag to distinguish its needs from more populous minority communities.
- **Governmental Assurance:** Minister Rijiju assured that the Union Government would protect all minority communities as per the spirit of the Constitution, particularly those with smaller demographic footprints.
- **Institutional Representation:** The Syro-Malabar Church, a major Eastern Catholic Church based in Kerala, plans to send a formal delegation to New Delhi to present the specific socio-economic grievances justifying this status.
- **Inter-Community Confidence:** The move is seen as an effort to build confidence among "smaller minorities" regarding the State's commitment to inclusive welfare and secularism.
- **Policy Implications:** Granting such a tag could lead to the sub-categorization of minority funds, targeted scholarships, and specialized welfare schemes under the Ministry of Minority Affairs.



### Definitions of Key Terms

- **Minority:** Although not explicitly defined in the Constitution, it refers to a group numerically smaller than the majority, possessing a distinct identity based on religion, language, or culture.
- **Micro Minority:** An informal or proposed sub-category within recognized minorities, referring to groups with extremely small populations (e.g., Parsis at 0.006% or Jains at 0.4%) who face unique existential or developmental challenges.
- **Secularism (Indian Context):** Unlike the Western "separation" model, Indian secularism implies **Sarva Dharma Sambhava**—the State maintaining an equal distance from and providing equal respect to all religions.



## Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Article 29:** Protects the interests of minorities by allowing "any section of the citizens" to conserve their distinct language, script, or culture.
- **Article 30:** Grants all minorities (religious and linguistic) the fundamental right to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice.
- **National Commission for Minorities (NCM) Act, 1992:** Section 2(c) empowers the Central Government to notify communities as minorities. Currently, six are notified: Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, and Zoroastrians (Parsis).
- **T.M.A. Pai Foundation Case (2002):** The Supreme Court ruled that for the purposes of Article 30, a minority is to be determined in relation to the population of the **State**, not the entire country.

## Additional Important Key Points

- **Demographic Statistics (2011 Census):** \* Muslims: 14.2%
  - Christians: 2.3%
  - Sikhs: 1.7%
  - Buddhists: 0.7%
  - Jains: 0.4%
  - Parsis: ~0.006%
- **Precedent of Parsis:** The Jiyo Parsi scheme is an example of a policy already targeting a "micro" group to prevent population decline.
- **Sub-categorization Debate:** The demand for a "micro minority" tag mirrors the debate on sub-categorization of OBCs (Rohini Commission), aiming to prevent the "creamy layer" of the minority umbrella from cornering all benefits.

## Conclusion and UPSC Relevance

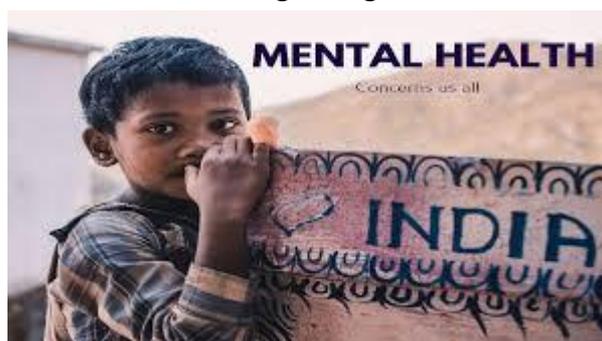
The demand for a "micro minority" status signifies a deepening of the discourse on social justice and minority rights in India. For the **UPSC Civil Services Exam**, this topic is essential for **General Studies Paper II (Polity and Social Justice)**. It highlights the "Issues related to the development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Minorities" and the "Protection of Interests of Minorities (Articles 29-30)." Understanding the nuances of demographic-based categorization is crucial for analyzing federalism, secularism, and the evolution of affirmative action policies in India.

## 8. Addressing the Crisis of Child and Adolescent Mental Health in India

The recent tragedy involving three adolescent girls in Ghaziabad underscores a burgeoning national crisis. Far from being isolated incidents, these events highlight a systemic failure to address the mental health needs of India's youth, now exacerbated by an unregulated digital landscape and a high-pressure academic environment.

### Key Dimensions of the Mental Health Crisis

- **Shifting Demographics of Vulnerability:** Mental health issues are manifesting as early as ages 4 to 5. Modern clinical observations show a rise in





complex comorbidities, such as ADHD paired with anxiety or depression linked to compulsive digital use.

- **Prevalence and Data Gaps:** National surveys indicate that 7% to 10% of Indian adolescents have diagnosable conditions, while 5% to 7% of school-aged children exhibit ADHD. Despite these numbers, early warning signs like withdrawal or impulsivity are frequently dismissed as mere "behavioral issues."
- **Acute Professional Shortage:** India faces a staggering deficit in mental health infrastructure, with fewer than 10,000 psychiatrists for 1.4 billion people. The sub-specialty of child psychiatry is even more critically underserved, leaving families to navigate fragmented care.
- **The Digital Accelerator:** With over 800 million internet users, the "blurring of boundaries" between education and entertainment on screens has led to increased internet addiction, irritability, and sleep disruption among minors.
- **Institutional Lag in Schools:** Educational institutions continue to prioritize academic rankings and competitive examinations over emotional regulation. This "weak link" neglects the fact that mental wellbeing is foundational to long-term productivity and creativity.
- **Economic Survey 2025-26 Context:** The latest Economic Survey explicitly acknowledges rising mental health challenges among the youth, proposing preventive strategies and considering regulatory limits on adolescent social media use, similar to global precedents in Australia and South Korea.

### Definitions of Key Terms

- **Comorbidity:** The simultaneous presence of two or more chronic diseases or conditions in a patient (e.g., Depression and ADHD).
- **Neuroplasticity:** The ability of the brain to form and reorganize synaptic connections, especially in response to learning or experience or following injury; it is highest during childhood and adolescence.
- **Trauma-Informed Care:** An organizational structure and treatment framework that involves understanding, recognizing, and responding to the effects of all types of trauma.
- **Tele-Mental Health:** The provision of mental health services using telecommunication technologies, such as video conferencing or phone calls, to bridge the accessibility gap.

### Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Article 21:** The "Right to Life" encompasses the right to health, including mental health, as affirmed by various judicial interpretations.
- **Article 39(f):** A Directive Principle (DPSP) stating that children should be given opportunities and facilities to develop in a healthy manner and in conditions of freedom and dignity.
- **Mental Healthcare Act, 2017:** Provides a legal framework for the right to access mental healthcare and prohibits discrimination against persons with mental illness.
- **Ayushman Bharat (School Health Services):** A flagship program under which Health and Wellness Centres (HWCs) are mandated to provide screening and basic mental health support to students.





## Definitions of Key Terms

- **Green Ammonia:** Ammonia produced by combining nitrogen (from air) with green hydrogen (produced via electrolysis of water using renewable energy), resulting in zero carbon emissions.
- **Grey Ammonia:** Ammonia produced using natural gas (methane) through the Haber-Bosch process, which releases significant CO<sub>2</sub> as a byproduct.
- **Offtake Agreement:** A legal contract between a producer and a buyer to purchase or even sell portions of the producer's future goods, providing "bankability" to the project.
- **Banking of Power:** A mechanism allowing renewable energy producers to "store" surplus power with the grid and withdraw it when needed, crucial for continuous green hydrogen production.

## Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Article 48A (DPSP):** Directs the State to protect and improve the environment, providing the constitutional basis for the National Green Hydrogen Mission.
- **National Green Hydrogen Mission (2023):** The overarching policy framework aimed at making India a leading producer and supplier of Green Hydrogen in the world.
- **SIGHT Programme:** A major financial component of the Mission, providing outlays for domestic manufacturing of electrolyzers and production of green hydrogen/ammonia.
- **Electricity (Promoting Renewable Energy Through Green Energy Open Access) Rules, 2022:** Facilitates easier grid access and "banking" facilities for green energy developers.

## Additional Important Key Points

- **Decarbonizing Hard-to-Abate Sectors:** Green ammonia is vital for the shipping industry (marine fuel) and the fertilizer sector, which traditionally rely heavily on fossil fuels.
- **Hybrid Systems:** To ensure operational viability, developers are integrating hybrid wind-solar systems with energy storage to provide a steady supply of power to electrolyzers.
- **Global Alignment:** For sustained momentum, India is working to align its green certification frameworks with global standards (like the EU's RED II) to facilitate future exports.

## Conclusion and UPSC Relevance

India's green ammonia model represents a shift from being a "technology adopter" to a "market shaper." By leveraging low-cost renewable energy and robust contract design, India is defining the global trajectory for clean hydrogen derivatives. For the **UPSC Civil Services Exam**, this is a high-priority topic for **GS Paper III (Energy, Economy, and Environment)**. It specifically relates to "Infrastructure: Energy," "Investment Models," and "Conservation and Pollution." Candidates should focus on how such missions reduce the fiscal burden of fertilizer subsidies and strengthen India's "Energy Independence" goals.

## 10. Judicial Clarification on Tribal Women's Inheritance Rights (2025-26)

The Supreme Court of India, in the recent landmark judgment of **Nawang v. Bahadur (October 2025)**, has conclusively ruled that the **Hindu Succession Act (HSA), 1956**, cannot be applied to members of Scheduled Tribes (STs), regardless of whether they have adopted Hindu customs. This verdict puts an end to the judicial trend of "Hinduisation" as a means to secure property rights, emphasizing that tribal identity and customary laws are protected under specific constitutional mandates.



## Key Highlights of the Supreme Court Verdict

- **Exclusion of Scheduled Tribes:** The Court reaffirmed the validity of **Section 2(2)** of the HSA, which explicitly excludes notified Scheduled Tribes from the Act's purview unless the Central Government directs otherwise via the Official Gazette.
- **End of 'Hinduisation' Doctrine:** The Bench overturned a Himachal Pradesh High Court order that suggested tribal women who adopted Hindu traditions should inherit under the HSA. The SC ruled that religious allegiance does not change the statutory exclusion of the tribe.
- **Separation of Powers:** The judgment clarified that only **Parliament** has the authority to amend or extend the HSA to tribal communities; the judiciary cannot overstep its jurisdiction to direct such legislative changes.
- **Preservation of Tribal Identity:** By refusing to apply Hindu law to STs, the Court protected the unique cultural and social fabric of indigenous communities, preventing the forced choice between ethnic identity and legal rights.
- **Customary Law Supremacy:** Inheritance in tribal societies remains governed by their specific customary practices unless a separate, formal statute is enacted by the legislature to ensure gender parity.
- **Conflict of Rights:** The ruling highlights the ongoing tension between **Article 21 (Right to Equality)** for women and the constitutional protection of tribal traditions, suggesting the need for a separate, codified legal framework for indigenous succession.



## Definitions of Key Terms

- **Hinduisation:** A socio-legal concept where members of a tribe adopt Hindu religious rites and abandon tribal customs to the extent that they are treated as Hindus for legal purposes.
- **Customary Law:** Long-established practices within a community that have acquired the force of law through continuous and uniform usage.
- **Section 2(2) of HSA:** A specific "savings clause" that ensures the Hindu Succession Act does not automatically apply to the 700+ notified Scheduled Tribes in India.
- **Bona Fide Intention:** A genuine, sincere, and honest intention to convert to another faith, backed by conduct and evidence, rather than a move intended solely for legal or material gain.

## Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Article 14 & 15:** Guarantee equality before the law and prohibit discrimination based on sex; often cited by those challenging the exclusion of tribal women from inheritance.
- **Article 342:** Deals with the notification of Scheduled Tribes by the President of India.
- **Article 366(25):** Defines Scheduled Tribes as such tribes or tribal communities as are deemed under Article 342 to be Scheduled Tribes for the purposes of the Constitution.
- **Fifth and Sixth Schedules:** Provide for the administration and control of Scheduled Areas and Tribal Areas, emphasizing the protection of customary laws.



- **Mizoram Inheritance Act:** Cited as a model where a state with a significant tribal population has codified succession to ensure gender parity while keeping tribal identity intact.

### Additional Important Key Points

- **The "Hindu" Definition:** The Court referenced the 1966 *Sastri Yagnapurushadji* case, noting that Hinduism is a "way of life" rather than a dogma, but emphasized that this broad definition cannot override the specific statutory exclusion of STs in the HSA.
- **Gender Parity Gap:** In the *Ram Charan v. Sukhram* case, the SC had noted that excluding daughters from property violates fundamental rights, yet the *Nawang* case shows that this cannot be rectified by misapplying the HSA.
- **Proposed Solution:** Legal experts and the Court have hinted at the need for a **Special Enactment** or codification of tribal customary laws (similar to the North-Eastern models) to grant women rights without imposing external religious laws.

### Conclusion and UPSC Relevance

The *Nawang v. Bahadur* judgment is a pivotal reference for the debate on the **Uniform Civil Code (UCC)** and the protection of tribal autonomy. For the **UPSC Civil Services Exam**, this topic is critical for **GS Paper II (Polity - Fundamental Rights vs. Customary Laws)** and **GS Paper I (Society - Tribal Issues)**. It highlights the complexities of "Legal Pluralism" in India and the challenge of balancing gender justice with the preservation of indigenous culture. Candidates should focus on the implications of Section 2(2) of the HSA and the role of Parliament in bridging the gap between tradition and modern constitutional values.

## 11. PM Modi's Israel Visit and West Asian Geopolitics: Parliamentary Scrutiny

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on External Affairs, chaired by Shashi Tharoor, recently reviewed the Ministry of External Affairs' (MEA) budgetary allocations and the strategic implications of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's scheduled visit to Israel on February 25, 2026. This visit, the first in nine years, occurs against a backdrop of severe regional instability and a US military build-up in West Asia, prompting intense legislative debate on India's "strategic autonomy."

### Key Highlights of the Parliamentary Discussion

- **Timing and Regional Volatility:** Members questioned the rationale of visiting Jerusalem while India has simultaneously issued advisories for citizens to leave Iran, suggesting a potential risk of India being perceived as taking sides in a widening conflict.
- **Diplomatic Objectives in Israel:** The visit aims to strengthen technology cooperation and innovation, with the PM scheduled to address the Knesset (Israeli Parliament) and visit the Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial.
- **Funding for Chabahar Port:** The MEA clarified that the absence of new budgetary allocations for the Chabahar Port in Iran is because India has fulfilled its current \$120 million commitment for equipment; however, members flagged this as a potential sign of waning interest in a key strategic asset.
- **MEA Budgetary Constraints:** The committee criticized the 7.8% increase in MEA's budget as inadequate compared to the recommended 20%, noting that the Ministry's share remains a mere 0.4% of the total Union Budget.





- **Diplomatic Footprint Gaps:** Concerns were raised regarding "under-staffed" missions, with India having no diplomatic presence in 41 countries and several missions being managed by a single IFS officer.
- **Strategic Autonomy Concerns:** Some MPs alleged that India's foreign policy is increasingly influenced by US interests, potentially compromising the traditional "Non-Aligned" or "Multi-Aligned" stance.

### Definitions of Key Terms

- **Strategic Autonomy:** The ability of a nation-state to pursue its national interests and adopt its preferred foreign policy without being constrained by other states.
- **Standing Committee on External Affairs:** A permanent department-related committee of Parliament tasked with scrutinizing the working and budgetary demands of the MEA.
- **Knesset:** The unicameral national legislature of Israel.
- **Chabahar Port:** A strategic port in Iran developed with Indian assistance to provide a transit route to Central Asia and Afghanistan, bypassing Pakistan.

### Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Article 51 (DPSP):** Mandates the State to promote international peace and security and maintain just and honorable relations between nations.
- **Article 113:** Pertains to the "Procedure in Parliament with respect to estimates," under which Standing Committees scrutinize the Demands for Grants of various ministries.
- **Article 246 (Union List):** "Foreign Affairs" and "Entering into treaties and agreements with foreign countries" are subjects exclusively under the jurisdiction of the Union Government.

### Additional Important Key Points

- **India-Israel Relations:** Transitioned from "hesitant" to a "Strategic Partnership" in 2017, focusing on defense, agriculture, and water management.
- **Humanitarian Context:** The visit is scrutinized due to the ongoing Gaza conflict, where casualties have reached significant levels, impacting India's balancing act between Israel and the Arab world.
- **Diaspora Management:** Since the 2016 merger of the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs with the MEA, members expressed concern that the specific needs of the 32 million-strong Indian diaspora are not receiving focused attention.

### Conclusion and UPSC Relevance

The scrutiny of the PM's visit reflects the inherent tensions in India's "Link West" policy, where it must balance ties with Israel, Iran, and the Arab monarchies simultaneously. For the **UPSC Civil Services Exam**, this is a vital topic for **GS Paper II (International Relations - Effect of Policies of Developed & Developing Countries on India's Interests)** and **(Polity - Parliamentary Committees)**. It highlights the role of the legislature in ensuring executive accountability in foreign policy and the financial challenges (0.4% budget allocation) that limit India's global "Soft Power" and diplomatic reach.



## 12. De-coloniality in National Symbols: President Unveils Rajaji's Bust

President Droupadi Murmu unveiled a bust of **C. Rajagopalachari (Rajaji)** at the Rashtrapati Bhavan, replacing the bust of Edwin Lutyens, the British architect of New Delhi. Positioned at the Grand Open Staircase, this symbolic relocation marks a significant step in the national effort toward "mental decolonisation" and the reclaiming of Indian institutional spaces from colonial vestiges.

### Key Highlights of the Event and Rajaji's Legacy

- **Shedding Colonial Vestiges:** The replacement of Lutyens' bust with that of Rajaji symbolizes a shift from celebrating colonial architecture to honoring the leaders who shaped independent India's consciousness.
- **The Last Governor-General:** Rajaji holds the unique distinction of being the first and only Indian Governor-General of India (1948–1950), bridging the transition from a British Dominion to a Republic.
- **Symbol of Swaraj:** President Murmu highlighted that Rajaji's act of placing portraits of Ramakrishna Paramahansa and Mahatma Gandhi in the Government House was a clear declaration of spiritual and political Swaraj.
- **Rajaji Utsav:** A public celebration from February 24 to March 1, 2026, has been organized to educate the masses about Rajaji's contributions to the freedom struggle and post-independence governance.
- **Ideals for Viksit Bharat:** The President emphasized that Rajaji's thoughts on Indian consciousness and his connection with the weaker sections are essential pillars for achieving the vision of a "Viksit Bharat" (Developed India) by 2047.
- **Spirit of Enterprise:** The event called for promoting enterprise and self-reliance, echoing Rajaji's later political philosophy which advocated for economic freedom and minimal state interference.



### Definitions of Key Terms

- **Governor-General of India:** The representative of the British monarch in India; the post was held by Indians only once (by Rajaji) before the office was abolished in 1950.
- **Dominion Status:** A semi-independent polity under the British Empire; India remained a Dominion from August 15, 1947, until it became a Republic on January 26, 1950.
- **Swaraj:** Literally "self-rule," a term popularized by Tilak and Gandhi, encompassing political independence as well as individual and spiritual self-restraint.
- **Decolonisation:** The process of a state withdrawing from a former colony, but in this context, it refers to the psychological and cultural effort to move past colonial intellectual influences.

### Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Article 51A(f):** A Fundamental Duty to value and preserve the rich heritage of the country's composite culture.
- **Article 51A(b):** A Fundamental Duty to cherish and follow the noble ideals which inspired our national struggle for freedom.



- **Article 52-62:** Pertains to the Office of the President of India, who functions as the formal head of state and the custodian of national heritage at Rashtrapati Bhavan.
- **Indian Independence Act, 1947:** The British statute that created the office of the Governor-General for each of the two new Dominions (India and Pakistan).

#### Additional Important Key Points

- **Bharat Ratna:** C. Rajagopalachari was one of the first three recipients of India's highest civilian award, the Bharat Ratna, in 1954.
- **Literary Contribution:** He was a prolific writer and won the Sahitya Akademi Award for his retelling of the Ramayana (Chakravarti Thirumagan) in Tamil.
- **The Swatantra Party:** Rajaji founded the Swatantra Party in 1959, which stood for classical liberalism and opposed the "License-Permit Raj" of the era.
- **Vedaranyam Salt March:** He led the Salt Satyagraha in the Madras Presidency (Vedaranyam March) in 1930, mirroring Gandhi's Dandi March.

#### Conclusion and UPSC Relevance

The installation of Rajaji's bust at the heart of India's executive residence is a profound gesture of "Cultural Rejuvenation." For the **UPSC Civil Services Exam**, this topic is highly relevant for **GS Paper I (Modern Indian History and Personalities)** and **GS Paper IV (Ethics - Values of National Leaders)**. It highlights the transition from colonial administration to Indian self-rule and the importance of symbolic decolonisation in statecraft. Candidates should focus on Rajaji's dual role as a pragmatic statesman and a cultural icon whose ideas on individual liberty and traditional values continue to influence modern Indian political thought.

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